

3.2 Ship Creek, Davis Highway and Otter Creek Gravel Pit Expansions

USAG-AK has proposed to expand three existing gravel pits at Fort Richardson; the Ship Creek, Otter Creek and Davis Highway gravel pits (Figures 35-37). These gravel pits will be expanded over time, and no exact dimensions for the expansions are proposed here. The expansions will not, however, expand beyond the 2005 survey areas in any circumstances. This would include any access routes, stockpiling areas and actual gravel removal areas. The purpose of these expansions is to obtain gravel for construction projects throughout Fort Richardson. These projects are located on map quadrangles ANC A8, T13N, R2W, Sections 8 and 9 (Ship Creek pit); ANC B8, T14N, R3W, Section 24 (Otter Creek pit); ANC B8 T14N, R2W, Section 28 (Davis Highway pit).

Surveys and Inventory

In June 2005 USAG-AK cultural resources staff reviewed the proposed project and the existing literature on cultural resources within the boundaries of Fort Richardson. The project areas were each pedestrian surveyed by a crew of 4-5 archaeologists employed by the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML, Colorado State University

Parallel pedestrian transects spaced at 20 meters or less were walked in all areas that were not deemed too wet or too steep ($>40^\circ$) to contain cultural material. Systematic sub-surface testing was undertaken in areas determined to be high probability (e.g., lake margins, ridges, benches adjacent to steeper slopes) during initial review of the proposed project area, and as determined by the supervising archaeologist and field crew leader based on survey findings. In addition to pedestrian transects, 40cm x 40cm shovel tests were excavated throughout the project area. None of the shovel tests excavated in the project area contained any cultural material.

The area surveyed around the existing Ship Creek gravel pit was generally a spruce forest with scattered birch. An access road for Moose Run Golf Course (ANC-01335, determined not eligible for the National Register in 2003) runs approximately north-south through the surveyed area to the west of the gravel pit. The golf course itself is located to the west and north, and to the south on the opposite side of Arctic Valley Road. A large area to the west and northwest of the existing gravel pit has been previously disturbed and cleared and vegetation there consisted of a very close-growing second growth spruce forest with alder. Various types of military debris were found throughout the forest here. A large area to the east of the existing gravel pit is low and wet. To the north of the pit the surveyed area gradually slopes up to the north towards the Moose Run Golf Course. Shovel testing was done primarily in this area, all with negative results.

The area surveyed around the existing Otter Creek gravel pit was a mixed spruce and birch forest with thick undergrowth of berry bushes and mosses. A large portion of the survey area to the west and northwest of the existing pit was flooded by a large beaver dam on a small creek. Shovel testing was conducted in dry areas away from the beaver-created pond and all shovel tests were negative.

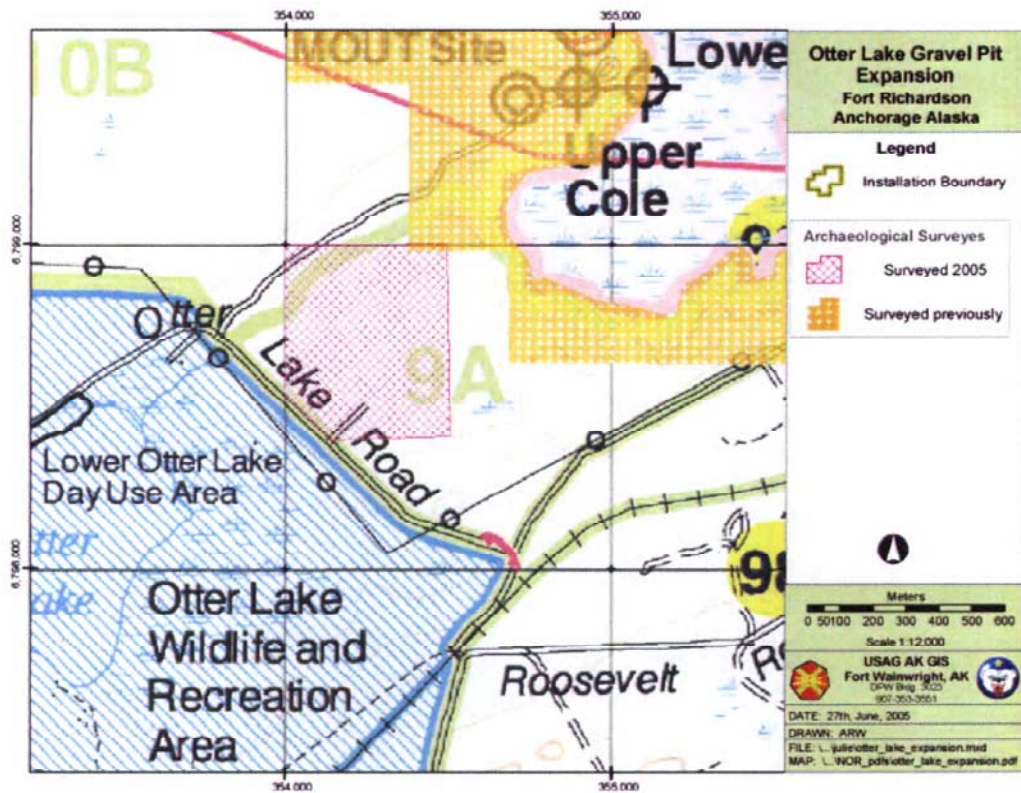


Figure 36. Otter Lake gravel pit expansion (surveyed 2005)

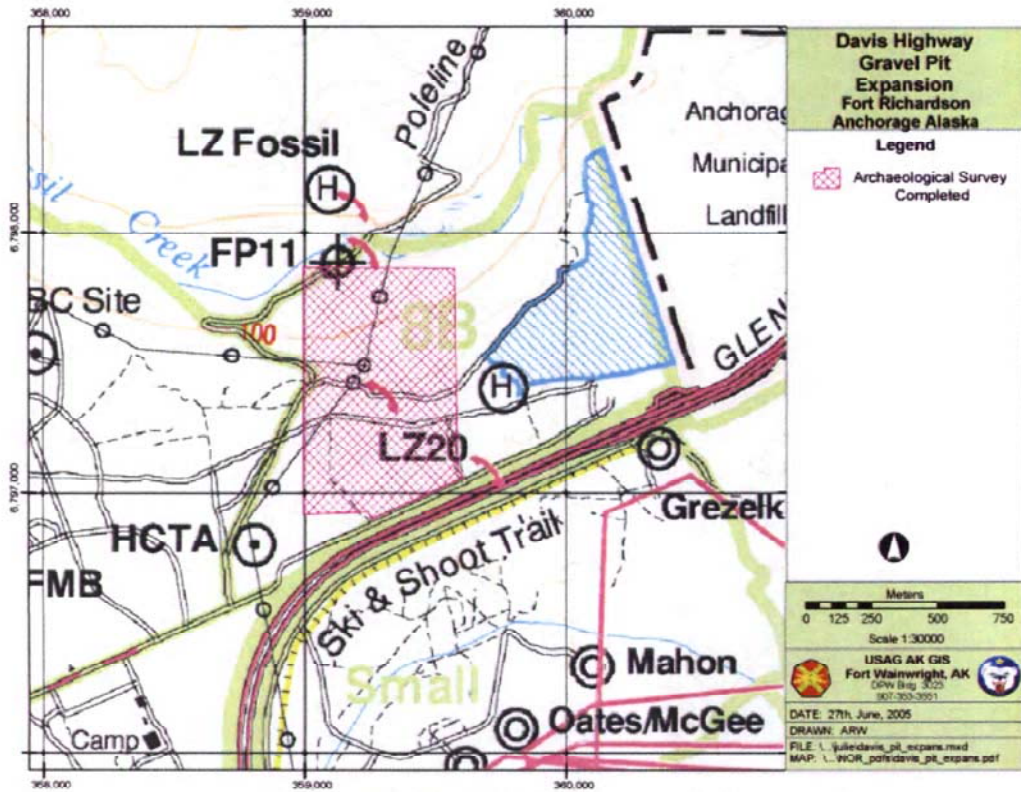


Figure 37. Davis Highway gravel pit expansion